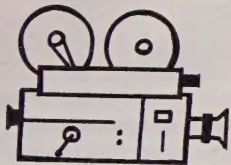




Almost Religion: The Persuasive Power of the Movies

Eric Christianson

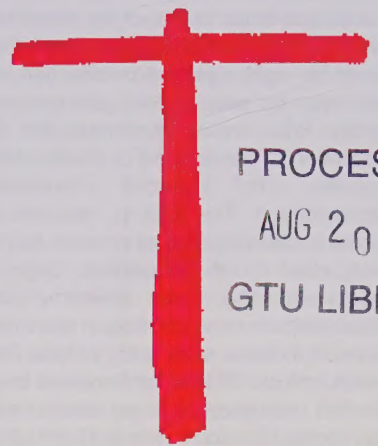
If you have not seen *Titanic* (1997) I hope I am not spoiling things by informing you that the star of the film sinks, but also that the male lead, Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio), fares no better. Amid the aftermath of the disaster, Jack and his sweetheart, Rose (Kate Winslet), are struggling to stay afloat on a piece of wood, Jack still immersed in the icy waters as Rose lies atop it.



Jack can no longer hold on and before he sinks he declares his love and makes her a promise worthy of the best Hallmark greeting cards ('...you must...you must do me this honour...you must promise me that you'll survive... that you won't give up... no matter what happens...'). When I saw the film at the cinema, something startling happened. As we watched Jack sink into the dark abyss, a sound arose, the sound of sobbing twelve-year old girls. You see, my wife and I attended the matinee Saturday show, and I am not exaggerating when I write that a chorus of lamentations surrounded us. But even more astonishing was what a girl somewhere behind me, between desperate sobs, proclaimed: '...I was going to marry

him!' So powerful was the rhetoric of *Titanic* that those girls were entirely lost in its story world. But how?

Every year I show that scene to my students in a course on religion and culture, and I ask them, "What is it in the film that enables such powerful viewer empathy to take place?" When they think about it, it begins to sink in (sorry!): framing (we only see Jack and Rose - no one else in the whole suffering world around them matters); visual signals (the blue lighting and the frost from their breath make us feel the cold); editing (there are impossible views, from directly above them, mixed liberally with 'point-of-view' shots from the character's perspectives - and it was the shot from Rose's 'pov'



PROCESSED
AUG 20 2007
GTU LIBRARY

The Gospel and the Silver Screen

Cinema attendance in the UK is at its highest for thirty years and it was anticipated that in two months this summer 35 million cinema visits would be made in the UK. Meanwhile, in our homes, new technologies constantly add to the variety, technical quality and sheer quantity of films available for our entertainment. In this *franciscan*, five film-lovers mull over the appeal of this popular art form. They share their likes and dislikes and consider how Jesus and Francis have been portrayed on screen. We also discover how film-goers can find themselves reflecting on spiritual and theological themes at the most unexpected moments.

Almost Religion	1
Not Just a Pretty Face?	3
Films and Faith -	
Films and Life	4
Sitting in the Seat of God	5
Minister's Letter	7
CSF in San Francisco	8
Community Routes	10
Book Reviews	12
Roger Alexander SSF	14
Bernard SSF	15
Geoffrey SSF	16

of Jack sinking that had the greatest audience impact, placing female viewers *right there*); music (students are almost always unaware of the fact that an instrumental version of the film's main theme - the truly awful *My Heart Will Go On* - is struck up at the key emotional moment). All of this (and more - even the overall structure of the film aligns the fate of Jack and Rose to that of the ship itself) somehow gets under the skin, and if we are of the right age and predilection, we may even be prepared to give over our earthly love and commitment for the remainder of our lives! For students the exercise is without exception empowering. The fact is, we are all literate in the language of cinema, but we rarely read it. If we want to begin to understand the most powerful and influential form of storytelling in our world, we need to know something of how films manipulate us. This is not the place to get into that discussion, but get started with, say, James Monaco's *How to Read a Film* or Martin Baker's *From Antz to Titanic*, and get hold of a good review guide, such as *Time Out* or *Halliwells*.

The rhetorical power of film is integrally related to its religious dimensions. In a recent BBC documentary, *How Art Changed the World*, Nigel Spivey argues that it is cinema that has taken up the mantle of Christianity through a combination of sound and imagery that, particularly in Europe, used to be mainly controlled by religious authorities: from the passion plays to the story-telling of cathedral stained-glass. And a number of scholars in recent years have reflected on the way in which the cinema-going experience has religious dimensions. For the very committed film-goer (who might say, 'I go to the cinema every week'), cinema is a 'binding commitment' - and we are touching on the literal meaning of religion. Film-going is also still usually a communal - that is, a shared - experience. We go with friends, we talk about films and their meaning as we might talk about what a sermon means. (The meaning of films is, I would suggest, always different when viewed in a group than when viewed alone.) As Clive Marsh asks in his recent *Cinema and Sentiment*, What are today's modern cathedrals? He suggests that malls and multiplexes are close contenders for the title - structures that

provide a place for people to come together from different contexts and hear and experience a shared story. The analogy could even continue on down to the 'side sanctuaries' of the individual screens-but that is pushing it!

We might also reflect on the religious dimensions of the viewing experience itself. Do we come to the cinema with heightened expectations, desiring an experience not unlike transcendence? Audience studies are showing that we have a remarkable capacity for empathy and involvement, not unlike the *Titanic* example I offered above. Christopher Deacy (in *Faith and Film* and also his earlier *Screen Christologies*) sees the act of movie-watching as potentially redemptive. Recognizing film as both a bearer and locus of religious meaning and reflection, Deacy develops the idea that films provide viewers the opportunity to examine the human condition as 'privileged witnesses'. Film-going is 'magical', promising a transcendent experience. The spectator, suggests Deacy, comfortably seated in the dark, has their outer perceptions minimized while the screen comes to life and the sound wraps around. Liberty and consciousness are lulled because of our fascination with the shadows, the lights, the rhythm, the actions or the passions presented.

There is a case for being cautious about the degree to which we give ourselves over to such a powerful sensory and emotional experience without reflection. I would not dream of delineating the sort of film we should reflect on (though I might say, what sort *shouldn't* we?), and I am sure we can all think of a startling array of films that have raised significant questions for our sense of spirituality, or ethical views, or even deeply held theological convictions. However, in some cases the case for understanding *what is happening to us* as viewers is paramount. Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is a recent case in point. When we combine all the 'rhetorical' elements of film-viewing with the fundamental power that the Jesus story has long enjoyed in Western culture, the result can be overwhelming. Whatever we think of Gibson's pre-Vatican II take on the passion story (and my own objections to the film are substantial - but again, this is

not the place!), there is no denying its force as a cultural phenomenon. As New Testament scholar Marc Goodacre has pointed out, the film is the first of the Christ-film genre to dare to tell the story mainly from the point of view of Jesus. We 'see' flashbacks that are, as it were, in the mind of Jesus. We hear what happens to Jesus 'close-up' on the cross, in gruesome detail. If we watch *The Passion* with an uncritical eye,

without reflecting on the implications of how the story is presented, we are courting an odd sort of ideological danger. This is a film that must be read, not just experienced.

In the end I think we have something to be thankful for in the movies. The best of them are forever surprising us with fresh questions, offering sites for reflection. We can watch *Whale Rider* (2002) and ask what it means to take our mythology at something more than a figurative level. We can watch *Magnolia* (1999) and wonder at the delicate balance between fate and decision that fills our daily lives. We can watch *Master and Commander* (2003) and reflect on the costs of the ever-forward momentum of technology. Whatever the film-going experience, the religious and just plain persuasive power of the movies demands the attention of the mind as much as the spirit. *f*



Eric Christianson is Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies at the University of Chester. He is co-editor of *Cinema Divinité: Religion, Theology and the Bible in Film* (SCM, 2005) and continues to teach and research in the area of film and its relationship to religion and the Bible.

Data Protection

The Society of Saint Francis voluntarily complies with data protection legislation in the United Kingdom; thus, if you are a subscriber, you should know that SSF holds your name & address on a computer database at St Francis Convent, Compton Durville, South Petherton, Somerset, TA13 5ES. If you have chosen to supply SSF with the details, your telephone number and e-mail address have also been recorded, plus the fact that you may be a Tertiary or Companion of SSF.

This information is only used by SSF and is not supplied to any other persons.

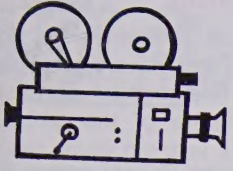
If you would like a copy of all data held under your name, SSF will supply you with the same for a pre-paid fee of £1.

If you wish to opt out of this database, you may do so, but it will entail you terminating your regular subscription to *franciscan*.



Not Just a Pretty Face?

Rev'd Rowan Williams



How do you portray great spiritual leaders on film? With regard to the depiction of Jesus himself, I am too young to remember the era of the great Hollywood biblical epics, but the question seemed to come alive again during my student years, which saw both Scorsese's controversial *Last Temptation of Christ* and the, to my mind, more interesting *Jesus of Montreal*, a

French-Canadian film in which a group of actors involved with a passion play are irrevocably changed by the experience. More recently still, of course, there has been more controversy, with *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) arousing strong feelings for a variety of reasons.

It is tempting also to include Monty Python's *Life of Brian*: of course it is not a portrayal of Jesus as such, but it raises some important questions about what is and is not legitimate when transferring any story to another medium. Whether the chosen story is or is not based on real life, it seems to me that the main problem with a visual medium like film is that it can leave so little to the imagination. In the case of attempts to portray the Christian story, we do not know what Jesus looked like, nor will we ever know: but film versions can run the risk of making us think we do, and then rejecting any

never read 'the book of the film'. It's not an easy task, nor is it a value-neutral one, to decide what exactly that 'essence' is. Very much the same is true of the film versions of the life of Francis. In the course of researching this article, I saw three, none of which I had ever watched in their entirety before: Rossellini's *Francesco giullare di Dio* (1950), Zeffirelli's 1970 *Brother Sun Sister Moon*, and Isabella Cavan's *Francesco* (1989).

Rossellini's black and white film is extremely interesting: although I am no cinéaste, I gather that it counts as a classic of the genre because of its daring early use of untrained actors and improvisation. Instead of a 'life of Francis', the film presents a series of discrete vignettes or chapters, acknowledging the *Fioretti* as its source. Another issue of accurate portrayal is raised here: Francis scholars know that the *Fioretti* are of later date and quite probably apocryphal, but did Rossellini's audience know that? The subtitle 'giullare di Dio', God's jester, is also a significant comment on the Francis Rossellini seemed to wish to present: the whole film has a lightness of touch consistent with the portrayal of a Francis who played 'violin' with a wooden stick, and includes some supremely comic moments such as the tale of Juniper and the pig's foot. In fact, Juniper rather than Francis becomes the focus of the latter part of the film, with Francis as more of a 'still centre' round whom the main action takes shape.

In each case, the director's choice of Franciscan source material has a marked impact on the film's narrative structure. Rossellini's reliance on the *Fioretti*, for example, militates against any attempt at linear narrative: some of the major episodes of Francis' life are missing, and there is no mention in the film either of his conversion, or of his illness and death. What remains is a kind of 'essence of Francis'. This effect is probably deliberate, as well as reflecting the episodic nature of its source: for the first few minutes, it is even difficult to tell which of the habited actors is Francis, until his words and presence begin to mark him out. This is lightness of touch taken to extremes.

By contrast, Cavan's seems to draw most

heavily on the *Legend of the Three Companions*: the film opens with the three, Leo, Angelo and Rufino, reminiscing (together with a refreshingly unromanticised Clare) about their experience of Francis and writing it down for posterity. The portrayal of Francis throughout the film is more or less consistent with that of the *Legend*, which was itself put together out of a particular agenda at a troubled time in the Order's history, and therefore gives a certain emphasis (one might even say distortion) to Francis' behaviour and sayings. *Francesco's* depiction of Francis' relationship with his father offers a fascinating critique to some of the *Legend's* primary preoccupations. Francis' black-and-white attitude to poverty is well attested, but the deeper the Order sank into internal debates on the subject, the more uncompromising were the sentiments attributed to him as more stories came to be written down for others to emulate. In nearly all the major sources, Pietro Bernardone is treated as the stock father-figure of medieval hagiography rather than a rounded human character. Cavan makes their relationship much more believable, showing clearly that father and son shared not only frustrated incomprehension but also distress at the breakdown of their relationship. For Cavan's Pietro, his concern with the material is intrinsically linked with his desire to do the best for his family not only in the eyes of the world, but, importantly, also in the eyes of God. Zeffirelli's Pietro, more conventionally, makes a show of piety by dragging his reluctant son to mass, while mistreating his servants and leaving any emotional contact with Francis to his wife: this is far nearer the approach, say, of Celano's first *Life* in which Pietro is little more than a pantomime villain, but it lacks the sense of emotional struggle which lends verisimilitude to Cavan's version.

But it's not just the use of the sources which is problematic when trying to present Francis sympathetically to a new audience. More than once, particularly with the Zeffirelli, I found myself wondering whether my instinctive aversion was due not so much to

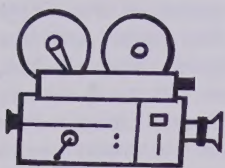


Continued on page 6

Try shrinking the Gospel narrative to its essence in order to explain it to someone who has never read 'the book of the film'. It's not an easy task, nor a value-neutral one.

subsequent experience which does not seem to fit. It is hard enough for some of the faithful to accept the ambiguity which biblical scholars insist is common to all written sources for the life of Christ (Who wrote them? For what purpose, and for what audience? How soon after the actual events? What sort of person did they want to portray to the reader?) but a comparison of the four Gospels quickly reveals that there are indeed four different slants on the same story. With film, such nuances are lost. It offers less freedom to build your own relationship with the Christ as you see him, because you are being confronted in such a direct and concrete way with the Christ that the director wants you to see and relate to. That was my own main objection to *The Passion of the Christ*: not the violence, not the confusion of biblical with non-biblical sources, but the attempted emotional manipulation.

In our post-modern age, we are used to wondering if there is any such thing as 'the facts', or whether straight reportage of 'the story' is ever possible. Try shrinking the Gospel narrative to its essence in order to explain it to someone who has



Films and Faith - Films and Life

Two Brothers describe how films have been used in diverse ways to bring people together for reflection and discussion.

Clark Berge
SSF writes:

It began during a Bible Study. My friend the Rev. Molly Blythe Tiechert asked me what I thought of doing a festival of films and faith. "Not religious movies," she said, "but serious films that raise important spiritual issues. We could have an interfaith panel discuss the issues in the film and open it up to the community for discussion." I agreed immediately, and we began to talk about all the different things we'd like to try, people to involve.

"So where do we get the movies from?" I asked. "Do we have to pay for them?" Neither of us knew the answers, so we contacted Myrna Lee, from the local arts council, who came to our first meeting at Little Portion Friary armed with catalogues. But she raised more questions than she answered, like paying for the royalties, renting a screening space, coordinating with the Arts Council, getting in with the people at Theater Three, a beautiful old building in Port Jefferson where many films are screened. She suggested we create an interfaith committee to do the planning.

Our first meeting we were all over the place, talking about films, dues, schedules, panelists. The meeting was exciting and we all emerged with long "to do" lists. As the weeks went by we developed a simple model and an interfaith committee dedicated to making the festival a reality: Jewish and Christian groups were our first organizing committee. We each contributed according to our ability - royalties were our biggest expense. We discovered we had to pay even if we used the DVD from the library. Next we had to choose the films. We all proposed the last five films we'd really loved as perfect candidates. We soon realized we'd have to ask others for suggestions. Then we set about screening the ones we felt the most interest in. We wanted to screen out any gratuitous violence and foul language: none of us were interested in defending the use of the "f****" word, and our Muslim panelist was very clear about what could and couldn't be depicted. We finally

chose three films and invited Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist friends to view the film and prepare a three minute statement of the most important spiritual issue from their perspective.

Two films were screened at Theater Three in Port Jefferson, NY, and one at the First Presbyterian Church in Port Jefferson (Rev. Molly Blythe Tiechert's church). Different groups took responsibility for the reception that either preceded or followed the screening. We invited Jon Anderson, the Newsday film critic to be our keynote speaker at our first screening.

The Festival of Films and Faith of Greater Port Jefferson has continued for five years. The wonderful thing about it is that while film is very important, the community dimension is even more important. The interfaith relationships have opened other areas of collaboration. Community members of each tradition take turns offering hospitality, and the receptions offer a wonderful chance to deepen relationships with others of our civic community. The film gives us something to talk about and the forum allows us to open conversations that are both appreciative of diverging points of view as well as significant areas that we have in common. Grass roots interfaith work like this is absolutely necessary in creating the necessary bonds of trust and affection that allow the communities of faith to widen and embrace all of humanity, to establish the foundations for trust and peace.

Desmond Alban SSF writes:

The occupants of an anonymous South London Housing Estate were fictional, but it was easy, a hundred miles away in outer-ring Birmingham, to feel that we'd met them before, both the characters themselves, and the issues they faced in their lives. The movie in which they featured was one of those used, often but not always featuring British urban youth, in the Year 11 Young Men's Group that has run as a course at Saint Clare's House, Birmingham for several years now. The six month programme usually began and ended with residential activity

weekends based at Hilfield Friary, to provide motivation and reward, and to help to build up relationships of trust between the members of the group, formed of 15 and 16 year old young men and the two SSF brothers, Alan Michael and Desmond Alban, who were with them consistently throughout. Some of the young men were from the regular youth groups at St Clare's house, but many were drawn in particular from other groups run by Brother Alan in two local secondary schools to address issues of disaffection and anger management in that setting. Gathering privately with a limited group of invited individuals also made it possible to use films on DVD, purchased for the purpose, as the heart of our regular meetings.

Once the group had gathered together (a process that could take some time!) all settled down to watch the film. Concentrated attention to one thing for ninety minutes or more was a challenge for some, and all would be glad of the short break that followed, but the group then came back together for ten or fifteen minutes of discussion before the conversation continued less formally over the take-away meal that concluded the evening. Each particular film might highlight certain specific issues - identity, ambition, friendship, drugs, violence, crime, fatherhood, the sober reality of life in prison - and the discussion was sometimes facilitated by an exercise to draw that out. For instance, all of us were given a sheet of thumbnail stills of those South London characters and were invited to caption each with a short description of what we thought of them. Reporting back around the circle began the discussion, whilst the papers themselves were kept as part of the evidence returned to Connexions (Youth Services) who had provided funding for the project. One word - sometimes the same one for half the group or more - seemed eloquently sufficient as a response to one or two of the characters! Though our usual rule at Saint Clare's House, "Respect each other and respect the place", still applied as much as possible, an easing of expectations around the appropriate use of language reflected the freedom and frankness of discussion that we sought, as well as the grittiness of the subject matter of many of the films. They never did believe us when we said that *The Sound of Music* would be next!

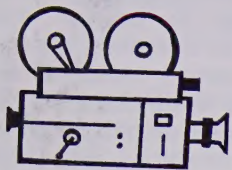
What was accomplished shouldn't be overplayed, but if one of the functions of art is to hold a mirror to ourselves, our likes and dislikes, hopes, dreams and attitudes, then cinema proved, for us, to be capable of functioning in that way. f



Clark Berge SSF is Guardian of Little Portion Friary, Mt Sinai, New York. **Desmond Alban**, pictured with a Year 11 Young Men's Group, lives in Birmingham, UK.

Sitting in the Seat of God

John Gribben CR



When I was a kid television had not yet made its way to Belfast. The popular forms of entertainment were the radio, the weekly comic papers and the cinema. By far the best loved was the cinema. In the square mile that we thought was the world there were eight picture

houses (today one of them survives). The quality varied from the cheap 9d (4.5 pence) to the classy *Ambassador* at 2/6.

You got good value. A two hour programme usually consisted of 'The big picture', 'The wee picture' (B movie), a comic short such as *The Three Stooges*, a cartoon, Pathe or Movietone News, a travel feature, a serial, trailers and the National Anthem. Programmes changed mid week and if you went to two cinemas regularly you were likely to see 32 films in an average week.

mostly biased - about how the West was won, World War II and Korea. John Wayne apparently defeated Native Americans, Germans, Japs and Reds single-handed. There were, however, many good historical biopics from which we learned about Nelson (and Lady Hamilton), the Brownings, Elizabeth I, Joan of Arc, Edith Cavell, St Bernadette and a host of inventors, explorers and conquerors. There were bible stories too, more interesting on the screen than in Sunday School. I saw David kill Goliath, I begged Samson from my seat not to drink the poison poured by Delilah (Yvonne de Carlo).

We didn't realise that we were being educated. We simply accepted that we were being entertained. Much of it was kitsch, schmaltz, exaggerated and inaccurate. Nevertheless it was the most important and influential medium of mass

education of any time in history. What is more, it was fun. We'd do anything to get out of school but we paid to get in to the picture house. We sold firewood, collected bottles and ran messages to raise the ticket money.

It wasn't just education - not just brain work. The cinema touched heart and soul as well. In January 2008 we'll be staging a day at the Mirfield Centre called *A Man's Gotta Do* (moral moments in the movies) in which we will look at the cinema's influence on conscience. Even the worst of movies involves one in the struggle between good and evil. Films could make you love the Bad Guy - the angel-faced Billy the Kid or the camp and polished Count Dracula - but they could never make you love badness. As a whole series of 'B' movies declared 'Crime does not pay!' so we found ourselves inspired by a whole series of good guys - Errol Flynn's Robin Hood standing up for the poor, James Stewart's Mr Deeds fighting corruption in Washington. Whenever someone was compromised or a cause betrayed we were offended. Whenever the coward or the weakling decides that once in a lifetime a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do we were thrilled and we cheered as he turned and beat hell out of his tormentor or stood up for justice against all odds. Many movies were about the defence of democracy, the



John Gribben CR

struggle for justice, free speech, the protection of the underdog, each an inspiring vision of the human quest for goodness and truth.

More recent and sophisticated cinema has tackled issues relevant to the present generation. Some films are prophetic, warning of how governments and states can become corrupted (*All the President's Men*, *Enemy of the State*). The cause of gay people has been better served by films like *Philadelphia* and *Priest* than all the debates in General Synod put together. Some films glorify war but powerful arguments against sending young men to be mangled on the battlefield are to be found in many others.

The things of God are always present in the cinema and not just in the crude one-dimensional Bible epics. When a young cowboy lies dying or when a life is cut short in a gangster or war movie, questions of eternity, judgement (and perhaps mercy) present themselves. I was surprised that the *Church Times* did not include *Shawshank Redemption* among its list of religious films during Lent because for me it is the most religious film ever made. We are presented with an ordinary man condemned for a crime that he did not commit, he finds the prison corrupt, the guards brutal, the authorities hypocritical and the inmates hopeless. His ministry to the souls in prison, the empty cell, the overthrow of the 'powers' portrays incarnation in language that cannot be ignored. The works of Spielberg, whether he is stretching our imagination (*The Green Mile*), presenting holiness in a courageous sinner (*Schindler's List*), or philosophical questioning as in *AI - Artificial Intelligence*, are all deeply spiritual. I don't want to stretch things too far but I think that the musical has the power to raise one to another plane and that a Kelly or an Astaire and Rogers dance routine may be a better metaphor for the joy experienced at Easter and Pentecost than all the tongues that Christians can manage to speak in.

Continued on page 7



Much of the material that we watched as kids was pretty trashy - we were unsophisticated and undiscerning but I'm pretty sure that I owe my education more to the cinema than to the local secondary intermediate. The cinema taught me to think. I was about three years of age when I was introduced to the works of Victor Hugo and Frank L Baum - that is to say I went to see *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Within a few years Dickens, Kipling, the Brontes, R. L Stevenson, Baroness Orczy and several classic American authors followed. My horror of war stemmed from Pathe newsreel coverage of the testing of the atomic bomb on Christmas Island and my introduction to politics was seeing the fall of the French Government under Mendes France.

I had to wait until I was a teenager for the works of Mary Shelley as *Frankenstein* was X rated. Needless to say, when I was taken, as a three year old, to see *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* I didn't realise that I was embarking on a literary education. It wasn't a very suitable film for an infant and I spent a considerable amount of time hiding beneath the seat in terror. I was more interested in the 'full supporting programme' that included *Superman*, *The Three Stooges*, and *Tom and Jerry*.

We were subjected to a lot of history -

Continued from page 3

the slant it put on the story as to the dated presentation. Perhaps any attempt to use a thirteenth-century character to speak to 'contemporary' issues will inevitably date, but I was thoroughly put off by the soft focus, the irritatingly whimsical soundtrack, the almost complete removal of any genuine religion from the story in favour of a vague, church-free

Thanks to his biographer, the one thing we know about Francis' appearance was that he certainly wasn't pretty!

'spirituality'; somewhat ironically, the only person who mentions God or the church for the first 30 minutes is Francis' father. Instead, the film relies on sentimental nature mysticism; covering approximately the period between Francis' initial call and the Fourth Lateran Council, it sensibly fades out at that point rather than portray the increasing regularisation of the Order. There is very little sense here of Francis the *alter Christus*, or of the very real cost of his vocation.

Following on from my earlier comments about the difficulties attendant on giving a face to Jesus, perhaps my real objection to the Zeffirelli version is to the dynamic of expectation set up by the uncanonical prettiness of the lead actor. Thanks to his biographer, the one thing we know about Francis' appearance was that he certainly wasn't pretty! Cavani's Mickey Rourke is also rather too regular-featured if your visual image of Francis has been hijacked by Celano's description or the Cimabue portrait, but his youthful energy and magnetism do seem consonant with the Francis of the sources. Rossellini's Francis avoids this particular cinematic cliché: almost nobody in his film is pretty, except Clare, but his Francis has a finely-drawn, idealist's face. Despite the lightheartedness implicit in the title, the world around God's jester and his followers is decidedly not pretty either, the torture of Juniper being particularly graphic.

At the time Rossellini's film was made, Clare scholarship was very much a

minority topic in Franciscan studies: it wasn't until the 700th anniversary of her death in 1953 that Clare studies really began to take off. Not surprisingly, then, Rossellini's Clare does little more than smile seraphically from under her veil. Twenty years on, Zeffirelli does his best with the child Clare who feeds lepers and speaks out against Francis' obsession with military glory, but the adult Clare who runs to him across a poppy field at the base of a mountain is pure schmaltz, bearing no resemblance to the determined 'spouse of the poor Christ' who became abbess of San Damiano in her mid-twenties. Cavani's Clare just predates the renewed interest provoked by the 800th anniversary of her birth, but nonetheless comes across as a much more decisive character: again consonant with those sources which present her as one of the guardians of the 'authentic' spirit of Franciscan poverty. Interestingly, this Clare is neither enclosed (another whole area of unresolved debate in Clare scholarship) nor especially pretty: this is a task-orientated, unromantic portrayal which tackles some of the real dilemmas over a woman's place in the Franciscan ideal.

Cavani's Francesco was the only one I found satisfying on either a psychological or spiritual level; it does not attempt to airbrush the Christianity out of its characters, but nor does their faith make it impossible to believe in them as human beings.

To someone already familiar with 'the story', assuming it is possible to agree on what the story is, it is difficult to judge the impact each film might have on an audience which was not. Zeffirelli's *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* wants to present a spiritual epiphany which has little or nothing to do with the institutional Church. *Jesus of Montreal* arguably does the same, but remains a much more

challenging film; the twist it gives to the original story is invigorating rather than distorting. The question attending any 'fictional' portrayal of a spiritual leader must be: would I want to follow the person, as they are presented here, on the spiritual path they advocate? There is much in all three Francis films that is attractive, but to my mind there is only one which transcends the initial attraction and draws the viewer to respond in kind.

Speaking personally, Cavani's *Francesco* was the only one I found satisfying on either a psychological or spiritual level; it does not attempt to airbrush the Christianity out of its characters, but nor does their faith make it impossible to believe in them as human beings. As such, it offers the best visual summary I know of Francis and Clare's essentially incarnational Gospel life. *f*

Rowan Williams is Assistant Curate of the Parish of the Resurrection, Leicester. She has written one book on Franciscan spirituality and is currently studying for a PhD on St Clare's theology of personhood.

franciscan

(published three times a year)

Subscriptions for 2007

United Kingdom	£6
Europe & Surface (outside Europe)	£7
Air Mail (outside Europe)	£8

(SSF cannot reclaim tax on subscriptions)

For UK & Europe – please send to:

The Subscriptions Secretary
St Francis Convent, Compton Durville,
South Petherton, Somerset.
TA13 5ES, UK

The preferred method for paying subscriptions is by UK Banker's Direct Debit; please request a form from the above address. Cheque or Postal Order payments are also possible.

Please make all cheques payable to:

The Society of Saint Francis

For America & Canada, contact:
Mrs Janet Moore, P.O. Box 341,
Warren, Massachusetts 01083, USA
 email: djmoore@samnet.net

For New Zealand, contact:
Rev. Anne Moody, P.O. Box 15-1033,
New Lynn, Auckland, N.Z.
 email: anne@ix.net.nz

For all other countries, please pay individual subscriptions by Sterling International Money Order, or by Bank Draft to the Subscriptions' Secretary in the U.K.

Subscriptions in 2008

There will be a slight rise in the subscription rate for *franciscan* as from 1 January 2008. The new rates recognise the cost of postage, which had not been included in the previous rates. We hope that our regular readers will not be put off by this.

The new rates will be

United Kingdom	£7
Europe & Surface (outside Europe)	£8
Air Mail (outside Europe)	£9

What Will You See Next?

Minister's Letter

Sister Joyce CSF
Minister General of the First Order Sisters, writes:

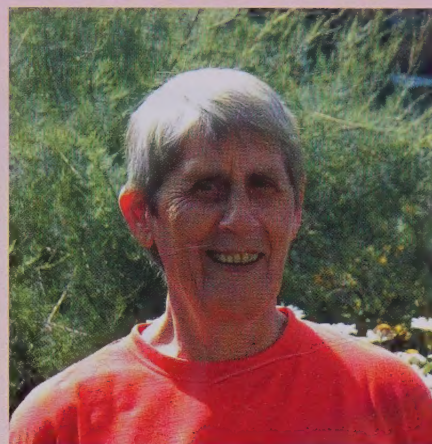
Dear Friends,

Daniel wrote in the last *franciscan* about the impending but expected ending of his time as Minister General and the experience of the sadness of the sudden unexpected death of Br Justus in Papua New Guinea, who was most likely to succeed him. Now six months on the brothers are in the midst of a new election process for Daniel's successor and 'Sister Death' has visited the brothers of the European Province with the deaths of three brothers, Geoffrey, Bernard and Roger Alexander. In this instance all three were in failing health and there are tributes to them elsewhere. However for me both Geoffrey and Bernard were significant in the shaping of my own vocation as well as being major figures in the development of SSF beyond the European Province and their deaths represent the end of an era in the history of SSF.

I was in Brisbane, Australia when the brothers first arrived in 1964. But prior to that Br Geoffrey had conducted a mission in St Alban's, Auchenflower, Brisbane which had made quite an impact on the life of that parish, and later (1965-68) when I was a parishioner there the seeds of a Franciscan vocation began to develop within me. The parish maintained a link with the brothers, then at Brookfield, and they were a familiar part of parish life. I often visited Brookfield, where I felt very much 'at home' in this joyful, hospitable, prayerful place and I also became a Companion.

By the end of 1968 after struggling for some time about whether I should 'grasp the nettle' and explore further a vocation to the religious life, I decided to leave Australia for England where CSF had its only house. Previous short experience of the religious life had made me cautious about being too obvious, so I embarked on a 'working holiday' with a sub-agenda known only to a few close friends. Then in January 1969, a few months before I was due to sail to London, the unexpected death of Br Simon, the Guardian of Brookfield, in a climbing accident, resulted in the election of Br Bernard to succeed him. When I arrived in London, one of the first people I visited was Rev'd William Baddeley, then Vicar of St James', Piccadilly and formerly Dean of St John's Cathedral, Brisbane and my spiritual director, who managed to glean from me my sub-agenda and insisted that I should see Bernard, who was still at Plaistow. This I did and he was very encouraging about my exploration.

At around the same time an article in *franciscan* caught my attention (I still have a copy of it) titled *Saying 'Yes' with Integrity* written by Bernard. It seemed to raise all the questions I was struggling with: *Was the Community the answer to the problem of me being me?; What are you doing with me Lord? Is it really what you are asking, or is it something I have dreamed up, something I am doing for myself?* Also there were some memorable statements about vocation: *Coming to grips with who we are and who God is - that is what makes both entry into the*



religious life and continuance in it a struggle; there is no escape from standing before God and being responsible for who we are; ...though one may flutter like a frightened bird picked up with a broken wing, yet the hand of God is sure. It seems to me that God allows all our flutterings to enable us to give ourselves more fully, but he himself is primary; whatever a religious does, he is witnessing to the fact that God is and that to trust him is the one thing that really matters.

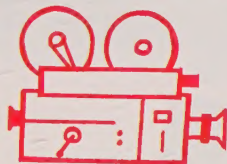
I thank God for the lives of Geoffrey and Bernard, and for using them to help me discover how to say 'Yes' with integrity, and for reminding me that birth and death, endings and beginnings are the very stuff of gospel living in affirmation of the risen Christ.

Pax et bonum,

Joyce CSF

Continued from page 5

The criticism that can justifiably be levelled at the film is that it is an enclosed world. It is the least post-modern art-form. In it things move towards a satisfactory, if not always happy, ending. Even tragedy looks to a better future or justifies itself as the outcome of warnings given earlier in the film. But this is because the film is always seen from the perspective of an audience: you and I sit in the seats of God and the angels as we watch the drama unfold and therefore it is very hard to produce a film where evil is the actual basis of the work. Nazi propaganda managed it as do some forms of pornography, but in a sense these exceptions are so perverted that they prove the point. Mainstream cinema is so optimistic of the triumph of good as to be naive. Is that such a bad thing? Perhaps the persistence of God's love for us is reflected in a hope that one day love will prevail and there will be a happy ending. *f*



Theme Prayer

Grant O God to us,
Who are content to sit in darkness,
Eyes to see and ears to hear;
That in the flickering image
Of the passing moment,
The harmonious cacophony
Of our surround-sound world,
We may perceive
The one equal Light,
The one equal music of Eternity.

Prayer on Entering a Cinema (after John Donne)

(1) St Francis House opens immediately onto Cesar Chavez Street, but (2 and 3) there is a quiet space in the garden behind the house, which is enjoyed by the sisters and those who come to visit. (4) Cecila, Maggie, Martha Brigid and Jean (pictured) each spend a morning a week at St Martin de Porres Soup Kitchen; and (5) the sisters take part in the weekly peace vigil outside the Federal Building - Pamela Clare and Maggie are in this photo. (6) Pamela Clare teaches Social Ministry at the Diocesan School For Deacons and (7) offers massage therapy to homeless people at several service agencies in the poorest part of the city. (8) Lynne is currently studying for the ordained ministry but previous to that was a chaplain at San Francisco General Hospital. She has spent the academic year 2006-7 at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxford.

Picture 9 was taken after Jean, the Minister Provincial, had received Lynne's profession in vows in July 2006; (10) Cecilia preached at the service, which was held at All Saints Episcopal Church, where Lynne worships on Sundays. (11) Martha Brigid was received as a novice in March 2007. (12) The sisters and brothers in San Francisco have a joint novice study programme, and the brothers and sisters often celebrate festivals together - with Ruth on bagpipes and Jude on a drum, it adds to the fun!



Francisco



Community Routes

◆◆ Preaching for the Preachers

In Cambridge in April, **Desmond Alban** attended the third quinquennial International Congress on Preaching, sponsored by *Preaching* magazine (published in Nashville, TN) and the Premier Media Group. With a predominance of American protestant theology, and accents to match, it felt at times as if he might need his passport to get home again but the conference was stimulating, challenging, inspiring and certainly bumper packed (the equivalent of 10 major evangelical sermons a day!). Each speaker showed himself (it nearly always was him) to be an outstanding proponent of the preacher's art, boundaries were not as narrowly drawn as might be feared, and the emphasis was largely on a positive message - although 'fundamentalist Pharisees', 'prosperity gospel Sadducees', (party) political preaching and a (misrepresented) Catholic Eucharistic theology all received passing flack! Durham's Bishop Tom Wright was a real highlight with his superb unpacking of St Paul's message at the Areopagus (the overall theme being idolatry), as were Alister McGrath countering the Idol of Science, and English Baptist Steve Chalke encouraging engagement with social need - and proving that his published controversial questioning of the doctrine of penal substitution didn't disqualify him! Desmond Alban's habit was, unsurprisingly, the only one to be seen, but he struck up a friendship with a multi-clad Jesuit (as is usual for them) who was another perhaps-surprising attendee - and as so often, there were the conversations with those who knew us Franciscans, both in the UK and the USA. He returned with much food for thought.

◆◆ Holy Week and Easter Travellers

◆ Moscow

Colin Wilfred writes:

2007 is one of those years in which the eastern and western dates for Easter coincide and this provided an incredibly rich background to the services and liturgies I was able to take part in and preach at.

In case you think that Anglicans are a recent arrival on the Moscow scene, actually there have been Anglican chaplains in the city since the sixteenth century. The present chaplain, Dr Simon

Stephens, ministers to a large congregation of diplomats, business people, students and others, together with their spouses and children: people drawn from all over the world, many working and living in stressful conditions, in a city of 15 million people with its own extraordinary history and life.

I was joined by three students from St Stephen's House, who are training for ordination, and together we were responsible for a prayer breakfast at 7 a.m., a midday concert with a devotional address, evening services and a Christian mystery play. Bishop Geoffrey Rowell of the Diocese of Europe came for the liturgies from Maundy Thursday to Easter Day. In between the worship, prayer and reflection, there were meals to share with generous parishioners, pastoral conversations and spiritual direction.

After celebrating our Easter Vigil, as Bishop Rowell, Canon Stephens and I had been invited by the Patriarch of Moscow to the Russian Orthodox Easter Liturgy, we went to the newly rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, which holds over 7,000 worshippers. The Vigil needed a certain amount of liturgical stamina and included four hours of standing! Vladimir Putin only managed one hour, so after he went we were invited to stand by the iconostasis with the government ministers.

Inevitably, I reflected on the astonishing reversal of fortune for the Russian Orthodox Church, which having survived 70 years of one of the most savage persecutions of Christian history, now has the awesome task of bringing and living the gospel in a vast country with immense social and political changes.

For me the most extraordinary (and moving) moment was when I spotted Patriarch Alexi (who is elderly and in poor health) *running* up the steps into the sanctuary - why? Then I realised that the choir were singing, 'Run and tell the world the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'.

◆ Morocco

Bart writes:

John and I spent Eastertide in Morocco, keeping company with a small fraternity of OFM friars in Marrakesh, who plied us with travel tips and introduced us to the Little Brothers of Jesus who live in the medina in the old city. After an excursion along the Draa river valley and then atop camels to the edge of the Sahara, we stayed with a community at Tazert in the foothills of the Atlas mountains. These were Poor Clares who had gone over to the

Melchite (Byzantine Catholic) rite in 1962 to gain more affinity with the Arab and Berber world. Vigils lasted two hours, of Arabic chant interspersed with French. The priest was a Lebanese monk who, having injured an ankle, performed the liturgy in a wheelchair as if it were a chariot. He introduced us to the poetry of Jallaludin Rumi.

In the coastal resort of Essaouira we met the local Catholic priest who disliked the sea, and took us instead to his smallholding where he had built a hermitage in which to retire. We were impressed by the tremendous hospitality and deep faith of the Moroccans, as well as disturbed by the poverty in which they mostly live. What a world!

◆◆ A Korean Retreat

Nicholas Alan writes:

In November of 2006 I flew out to Korea for a four month stay in the country where I had once worked for the Church Mission Society. Part of the time I spent with the Korean Franciscan Brotherhood at their friary in the north-east of the country, towards the border with North Korea. For all the news that the West hears about nuclear stand-offs, people in Korea just get on with their lives, hoping and praying for peaceful reunification of the country and lamenting their division since the end of the Second World War. The Korean Franciscan brothers Stephen and Lawrence, together with Christopher John from New Zealand, provide hospitality to visitors and retreatants, working also as managers for the Seoul diocesan retreat house next door. The area is beautiful countryside with mountains all around and the nearest town acting as a ski-resort in the winter. The Korean Anglican Church is very proud of this fledgling community for men - the first in the church - building on the faithful witness and service of Korean Anglican women's communities since 1925.



Sweeping snow at Kyeryongsan International Zen Center

Then as the first snows of winter descended, I headed south to spend a 3 month retreat at a Korean Zen Buddhist monastery. I had visited the place briefly before, but this was my first opportunity to take part in one of the twice yearly retreat seasons. An international community had gathered, with a schedule of chanting, silent meditation and some manual work from 3 o'clock each morning to 9 o'clock at night. Being woken by scriptures chanted outside in the freezing pre-dawn air by the resident novices made me realise how relatively easy life had been as a novice in the SSF! Having few conversations and no news or communication with the outside world for all the time in retreat made everything seem so noisy and hectic on my return to the city afterwards. I now appreciate all the more the love of Francis for the silence of the mountain hermitages of Umbria. But it was good also to return to my Franciscan brothers, to hear news from home, and to relax again into the familiar phrases of the psalms and the liturgy of the church.

◆◆ Round up

In April, **Samuel** was re-elected as Minister Provincial of the European Province of SSF. **Alan Michael**, **Kevin** and **Nicholas Alan** have been ordained priest. **Nicholas Alan** has begun a term as Guardian of Glasshampton and **Benedict** has moved to Hilfield as Guardian there. **Amos** has moved to Glasshampton. **James Anthony** has returned to the UK from Tanzania, and is now on Holy Island. **Philip Bartholomew** has moved to St Matthias' Vicarage. **Jason Robert** has formally transferred to the European Province from the Province of the Americas whilst **Jonathan Guthlac** (as he is now known) has transferred the other way. **Kentigern John** has returned to the UK from the Australia-New Zealand Province and is now at Hilfield. **Clifton Henry** was expected to arrive at St Matthias' Vicarage in the summer for a year's stay in the province.

Christine James and **Moyra** have moved to St Matthew's House in Leicester, where they will be involved primarily with the people on the St Matthews estate.

Donald celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his profession on 17 March.

In the CSF Province of the Americas, **Jean** has been re-elected Minister Provincial

2007 is the eight hundredth anniversary of the birth of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, one of the patrons of the Third Order. To mark the anniversary, Third Order members have arranged Eucharistic celebrations to be held in Darlington (21 July) and on 17 November at the Altar of St Francis and St Elizabeth in Southwark Cathedral.

Robert Coombes has been released from his life vows and membership of SSF. *f*

Hilfield Friary 2007

Stigmata Festival

15 September beginning with sung Eucharist at 12 noon.

Preacher and President:

The Bishop of Sherborne

Afternoon session also with the bishop

Evening Prayer at 5pm

(Please bring a packed lunch)

Weekend Retreats:

5 - 7 October

Becoming Instruments of Peace

led by Samuel SSF

2 - 4 November

Pathway to Prayer

led by Kevin SSF

*

Pre-Advent Quiet Day

Saturday 1 December

10.00 - 4.00

(Please bring a packed lunch)

*

If you are attending any of the above events, please advise the Guest Brother

*

Phone 01300 342 313

or email

hilfieldguests@franciscans.org.uk

Hilfield Peace and Environment Project

www.HilfieldPROJECT.co.uk

Compton Durville 2007 - 2008

Quiet Days from 10 - 4

(Please bring a packed lunch)

Saturday 22 September 2007

Angles on Angels

Saturday 1 December 2007

Who/What is coming?

Friday 29 February 2008, repeated on

Saturday 1 March: Lent Quiet Day

*

Gardeners Practical and Prayerful:

18 - 23 September 2007

1 - 6 April 2008

*

Christmas with the Community:

22 - 27 December, 2007

Please book for all the above events.

*

Individually Guided Retreats

are available by arrangement

Self-catering accommodation available:

*

For the programme for 2008 or more details of the above, contact:

The Guest Sister, St Francis

Convent, Compton Durville, South

Petherton, Somerset TA13 5ES

Phone 01460 240473

or email

comptondurvillecsf@franciscans.org.uk

The Questionnaire

680 questionnaires were returned, approximately one third of the total, a very pleasing response to the questionnaires sent out with the January 2006 magazine. Overall, the general feel was that readers appreciate the magazine as it is, with the current balance of 'theme' articles, book reviews, Minister's Letter, a varying style of 'back page' article, and information about the brothers and sisters of the First Order in the European Province. A few people had suggested a 'Letters to the Editor' section, but in a magazine that is published only three times a year, there is such a time lag between responses as to make this impractical.

There were a large number of requests for more news and information about the First Order in other parts of the world, and the Board agreed to feature another province at least once a year - this issue features the sisters in the Province of the Americas on pages 8-9, and the next issue is likely to feature the brothers in the Province of the Americas. *Community Routes* plus the house up-dates - the latter omitted from this issue because of having three obituaries - helps to keep readers informed about the ministries and daily life of the brothers and sisters throughout the province, taken over a period of time. It would make very boring and repetitious reading to be saying much more about what we get up to! The January 2007 issue, with the theme of Saint Clare and featuring the Second Order, had been planned before the questionnaire was sent out; many readers had asked to know more about them. The Third Order has its own magazine and information networks, and as *franciscan* is the magazine of the First Order in the European Province, the Editorial Board agreed that it would generally only include snippets about the Third Order, as appropriate.

There were very helpful suggestions as to future themes that might be included, and these were taken into account when the Editorial Board was considering the next cluster of issues. A Franciscan perspective on topical issues such as the environment, poverty, Islam and social issues, were among those suggested. There were a number of requests for prayer/devotional articles, and although this is a little more difficult to incorporate into the present format, the suggestion has not been forgotten. The request for clearer type had led to the change in script, which we hope is meeting the need; a larger size font would mean either more pages in the magazine or shorter or fewer articles. The use of colour was generally well received, and it has enabled a wider selection of photos to be included.

Thank you to all who sent back the questionnaires and for all the comments and suggestions made; we hope our readers will continue to enjoy the magazine and encourage others to subscribe to it. *f*

Book Reviews

John Lane

The Spirit of Silence
Making Space for Creativity
 ISBN 9781 9039 9874 8

Green Books Ltd. UK, 2006, £8.95

This book is a sequel to the author's *Timeless Simplicity - Creative living in a consumer society*; and takes us further into the possibilities of following our potential, discovering the truth of ourselves and perhaps glimpsing the God behind all creation, to whom, consciously or not, we all move.

Lane begins this absorbing book with a short chapter headed 'Spiritual Space', in which he points up understandings and experience of silence and solitude in all the major religions. He brings us the beauty and the interpretations of artists and philosophers from all parts of the world. The breadth and variety of the quotations from many famous and some less known names give us a window into the most wise and saintly and the most creatively endowed among human beings. This chapter ends with a pointer to our need for interior quietness in a world of noise and over-activity.

The next chapter focuses on the attainment of such quietness and its use, through well-known guides, for example, Hildegard of Bingen, Thoreau, Cezanne, Merton and others. We then move into the possibilities of what Lane calls 're-enchantment'. He reminds us of George Herbert, Monet and others who have learnt 'the art of the commonplace'; suggests the need for a spirit of gratitude and praise, use of our creative ability, the importance of relationships and the healing power of nature. To live in the present moment, to look for the beauty around us and to meditate on what we find attractive and lasting: all these will bring great benefit to our quality of life and stimulate our creative talents.

The last chapter is short and is entitled 'Just Live Right'. Here we find examples of people who, through the ages have, in Lane's view, done so.

He begins with Virgil, who lived quietly and wrote his poetry through years of war and civil disorder; and follows on with Montaigne, Walt Whitman nursing the injured and others. These and many others, writes Lane in conclusion, 'turned adversity into advantage, hate into love, the negative to its opposite'; so providing inspiration for all seeking sanity in an apparently mad world.

Returning briefly to his theme of the need for silence, solitude and slowness, he gives us finally a line from Thich Nhat Hanh, 'The destruction of the human race can only be avoided by finding a new cultural direction in which the spiritual dimension plays the role of guide'.

Elizabeth CSF

Barbara Butler

Living with Faith

ISBN 9781 8585 2306 4

*Inspire, 4 John Wesley Road,
 Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6ZP
 2006, £6.99*

With the subtitle *Journeys Towards Trust, Friendship and Justice* this could hardly be more topical and needed. Barbara Butler's accounts of a multitude of contacts with other faiths, both between groups and individuals, is immensely encouraging, and we all need encouragement in this area at this time. Her worldwide contacts are very impressive, and certainly opened my eyes to many areas that I could not have known. She deals with Living with Faith in the post-9/11 World, with Listening and Sharing, Wholeness and Holiness, Witnessing to Faith, Divisions, Suffering and Strife, and all this against the background of Only One World. It is cheering to find references to familiar names from our own community's background of friendships, including Br Nicholas Alan's present share in such contacts. We, in the Society of St Francis, have come from a setting which has contributed to the present dialogue.

There are two Appendices: the first deals with Building good relations with people of different faiths and beliefs, and the second is 'The 1993 Declaration Towards a Global Ethic'. The notes include details of many books for further reading, and then there are final sections on questions and resources, and a list of some useful organizations. Altogether this is a very useful book as well as one that can be inspiring.

The passage that has lingered in my mind, and that I would like to have printed in capitals or bold lettering, and therefore wish to repeat here is 'It is not easy for many people of faith, including Christians, to be good listeners because we are all so keen to share our own faith, and so used to talking about it, that we often miss the opportunity to learn and also to share.' If all the readers of this book can take this to heart there will be more hope for us all.

Gillian Clare OSC

Leonardo Boff

Fundamentalism, Terrorism and the Future of Humanity

Translation notes: Alexandre Guilherme
 ISBN: 9780 2810 5797 9

SPCK, London, 2006, £8.99

In 65 brief pages, Leonardo Boff explains a variety of fundamentalisms: religious, political and scientific. The roles of religion, globalisation and trade markets are explored as they relate to creating a culture that promotes either peace or war.

This is a fresh left-wing take on world politics post 9/11. It will blow dust and cobwebs away, remind you of the days when you were more radical than now. According to Boff, market capitalism is not good, to put it mildly. To attain peace we need more co-operation and less

competition. The market place is a war zone. Only 1% of our genetic make-up differs from that of gorillas - and it is what enables us to compete with one another.

You get the drift. OK, so some of us are getting richer, but at what cost to world peace and the environment?

Together with past colonialism and slavery, the globalised market has caused bitter resentment and the north-south divide. Fundamentalism has arisen to give the excluded an identity, and terrorism has erupted because politics has failed. In this book, St. Francis' meeting with the Sultan merits two pages, and Teilhard de Chardin's concept of noosphere explains where humanity is headed. The times they need to be a-changing, is the message, if we are to give peace a chance.

Amos SSF

Sally Rena

All Things Give God Glory
A Catholic Anthology

ISBN 9780 2325 2643 1

Continuum, 2005, £14.99

This anthology was born out of the compiler's personal tragedy and over time the extracts have given her hope and courage. The foreword and afterword are written by Timothy Radcliffe. The material comes from a variety of sources and periods of time, extracted from the Bible, the saints, poets and secular writers - like Gerald Manley Hopkins, George Herbert, Carl Jung, Simone Weil, Plato to name just a few. Extracts are compiled under 45 headings ranging from praise and thanksgiving, the beauty of the world, faith, the will of God, suffering, grief, death, the resurrection, sin, purgatory, the doctrine of hell, mystery. This book has a strong Catholic flavour, but as there are sources and opinions from people who are not Christian, there is a great variety in these 500 extracts. It is interspersed with passages that made me smile, it is grounded in reality and speaks to me in my daily life, and I think would be a valuable companion for others too.

Over the past months I have found it a very useful book to 'dip into'; I've used it when working with house groups on a mission in a parish, and also in my personal prayer and meditation. Two snippets that made me smile because of the grains of reality and humour contained within them are: On religion - 'Pain is an interesting subject for discussion between people who are not suffering. Those who do suffer have no time to discuss it. They have all their work cut out to cope.' (Eleanor Hamilton King) On the doctrine of hell - 'Indeed the times are troubled,' he said, 'But we must remember that we are in God's hands.' 'I know we are,' said Mrs Brandon earnestly, laying her hand on the Vicar's sleeve, 'and that is what is so very dreadful.' (The Brandons)

I certainly recommend this book to readers of this magazine.

Beverley CSF

AMERICAS

Little Portion Friary, PO Box 399, Old Post Road, Mt Sinai, NY 11766/0399, USA ☎ (631) 473 0553; fax: (631) 473 5093 ✉ mtsinaifriary@s-s-f.org

San Damiano Friary, 573 Dolores Street, San Francisco, CA 94110, USA ☎ (415) 861 1372; fax: 861 7952 ✉ judehillssf@aol.com
✉ Minister Provincial SSF: judehillssf@aol.com

Saint Francis House, 3743 Cesar Chavez Street, San Francisco, CA 94110, USA ✉ csfsfo@aol.com
☎ (415) 824 0288; fax: (415) 826 7569
✉ Minister Provincial CSF: jeancsf@aol.com

Conventuo da Divina Providencia, Rua Acurua 180, Vila Romana-05053-000, **Sao Paulo-SP**, Brazil. ☎ (11) 3672 5454 ✉ freiiose@hotmail.com

AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND

The Friary, Saint Philip's Rectory, 115 Cornwall Street, **Annerley**, Brisbane, Qld 4103, Australia
☎ (07) 3391 3915; fax: 3391 3916

Hermitage of Saint Bernardine, PO Box 46, **Stroud**, NSW 2425, Australia ✉ ssfstrd@bigpond.com
☎ (02) 4994 5372; fax 4994 5527

The Friary of the Divine Compassion, PO Box 13-117, Hillcrest, **Hamilton** 2034, New Zealand
☎ (07) 856 6701; fax: 6901 ✉ frary@franciscan.org.nz

EUROPE

The Friary, **Alnmouth**, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 3NJ ☎ (01665) 830213; fax: (01665) 830580 ✉ alnmouthssf@franciscans.org.uk

Anglican Chaplaincy, Via San Giacomo 1, 06081 **Assisi** (PG), Italy. ☎ (+39) 075 816 887
✉ thomasanthonyssf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Clare's House, 2 Fourlands Road, **Birmingham** B31 1EX ☎ (0121) 475 4482
✉ birminghamssf@franciscans.org.uk
SSF Provincial Secretary ☎ & fax (0121) 476 1912
✉ secretaryssf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Francis House, 113 Gillott Road, **Birmingham** B16 0ET ☎ (0121) 454 8302 fax: 455 9784
✉ birminghamcsf@franciscans.org.uk
✉ secretarycsf@franciscans.org.uk

43 Endymion Road, **Brixton**, London SW2 2BU
☎ (020) 8671 9401; ✉ brixtoncsf@franciscans.org.uk
Minister General CSF: ✉ ministergeneralcsf@franciscans.org.uk

Jeremy Driscoll OSB
A Monk's Alphabet
ISBN 9780 2325 2643 1
- DLT, 2006, £9.95

Jeremy Driscoll OSB, Benedictine Monk and Priest, has produced a collection of reflections and meditations which echo such writers as the Desert Fathers. This is a collection of short reflections, which are intended to draw the reader in to the spiritual journey.

The thoughts are presented in alphabetical order by title, not subject, so there is no specific order to the contents.

Although the book is laid out A-Z dictionary style, the reader's route need not be so linear. We are invited and encouraged to explore the contents in any number of ways; cover to cover, leafing to a particularly attractive entry, or by following a word or phrase and the thoughts it provokes, as can be done with

Addresses

Please take care with email addresses as other Franciscan organizations have similar ones.

The Friary, 6A Stour Street, **Canterbury**, Kent CT1 2BD ☎ (01227) 479364 & 477025 (Colin Wilfred)
✉ canterburyssf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Francis Convent, **Compton Durville**, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5ES
☎ (01460) 240473; fax: 242360
✉ comptondurvillecsf@franciscans.org.uk
✉ ministercsf@franciscans.org.uk

Bentley Vicarage, 3a High Street, Bentley, **Doncaster**, DN5 0AA ☎ (01302) 872 240

Saint Matthias' Vicarage, 45 Mafeking Road, Canning Town, London, E16 4NS
✉ canningtownssf@franciscans.org.uk
☎ (020) 7511 7848

Saint Mary's Convent, 178 Wroslyn Road, **Freeland**, Witney, Oxon OX29 8AJ
☎ (01993) 881225; fax: 882434
✉ community@oscfreeland.co.uk

The Old Parsonage, 168 Wroslyn Road, **Freeland**, Witney, Oxon OX29 8AQ ☎ (01993) 881227

Saint Mary-at-the-Cross, **Glasshampton**, Shrawley, Worcester WR6 6TQ ☎ (01299) 896345; fax 896083
✉ glasshamptonssf@franciscans.org.uk

The Friary, **Hilfield**, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE
☎ (01300) 341345; fax: 341293
✉ hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk
✉ ministerssf@franciscans.org.uk

The Vicarage, **Holy Island**, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2RX ☎ (01289) 389 216
✉ holyislandssf@franciscans.org.uk
Provincial Bursar SSF: ✉ bursarssf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Matthew's House, 25 Kamloops Crescent, **Leicester** LE1 2HX ☎ 0116 253 9158
✉ leicestercsf@franciscans.org.uk
Provincial Bursar CSF: ✉ bursarcsf@franciscans.org.uk

House of the Divine Compassion, 42 Balaam Street, **Plaistow**, London E13 8AQ ☎ (020) 7476 5189
✉ plaistowssf@franciscans.org.uk

10 Halcrow Street, **Stepney**, London E1 2EP
☎ (020) 7247 6233
✉ stepneycsf@franciscans.org.uk

First Order Gift Aid Secretary: Saint Francis Convent, **Compton Durville**, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5ES ☎ (01460) 240473

Minister Provincial TSSF: Richard Bird TSSF
32 Bristol Rd, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2DL
☎ (01284) 723 810
✉ ministertssf@franciscans.org.uk

Franciscan Aid TSSF: The Treasurer TSSF
Leslie Johnson, 15 Breton House, Barbican London EC2Y 8DO ✉ franciscanaid@franciscans.org.uk

PACIFIC ISLANDS

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Saint Mary of the Angels Friary, **Haruro**, PO Box 78, Popondetta 241, Oro Province ☎ PNG 329 7060

Saint Margaret's Friary, **Katerada**, PO Box 78, Popondetta 241, Oro Province

Saint Francis Friary, **Koki**, PO Box 1103, Port Moresby, NCD ☎ & fax: PNG 320 1499
✉ ssfpng@online.net.pg

Martyrs' House, PO Boz 78, **Popondetta**, Oro Province ☎ PNG 3297 491

Philip Friary, **Ukaka**, PO Box 22, Alotau, Milne Bay Province

SOLOMON ISLANDS

St Francis Friary, PO Box 7, **Auki**, Malaita Province ☎ 40054

La Verna Friary / Little Portion, **Hautambu**, PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal

Patteson House, PO Box 519, **Honiara**, Guadalcanal
☎ Honiara 22386 Regional Office: ☎ & fax 25810

San Damiano Friary, Diocese of Hanuato'o, **Kira Kira**, Makira Ulawa Province

St Bonaventure Friary, **Kohimarama** Theological College, PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal
☎ 50128

Michael Davis Friary, PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal

Holy Martyrs Friary, Luisalo, PO Box 50, Lata, **Temotu** Province

a standard dictionary.

Jeremy Driscoll does not write specifically about his life as a monk, although elements of this do permeate the book. What he does achieve, is something of great value to a wide readership, for these reflections show how rooted in everyday experience and endeavour the monastic life is. Jeremy Driscoll effectively allows us to join his spiritual quest, and thereby come to focus on our own. Everyday situations and events become part of the lifetime spiritual journey we all share, Priest, Religious and Lay.

Each short reflection can stand alone, so this is a very useful book to have at hand during prayer times, when a little interior focus is needed. I also suspect that this will on occasion be a very helpful volume for kick-starting the odd homily outline!

Maximilian SSF

Hilfield Friary Shop

Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE UK
Tel: (01300) 341345
Fax: (01300) 341293
email: hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk

Open: Tue- Sat 2.30-4.30

The shop stocks religious books, including many with a Franciscan theme. The books, some of which have been reviewed in *franciscan*, may be obtained by mail order but only if held in stock.

A large variety of good quality cards, postcards, candles, sweatshirts, tee-shirts, gifts and Traidcraft goods is also on sale.

Credit card facilities available

Brother Roger Alexander SSF

Samuel SSF

1 Peter 1:7: 'In this you rejoice even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials'

I think that we were all a bit taken by surprise at Roger's death just two weeks ago. Of course, we had known for a long time that he was seriously ill - it must have been about 4 years ago that the cancer was first diagnosed - but he seemed to bear it so well, so steadfastly and so courageously, that we had got used to him surviving as he passed successive life expectancy dates. In the end his death came quite suddenly, perhaps surprising even Roger himself. It was a great blessing that he was able to make the journey home to his sister - and your care for him in his last days, Gill, was very special. Thank you so much.

The Boy Scout Manual used to say that you could always tell a man by his shoes, and that was certainly the case with Roger. Every evening after Compline, whether at Hilfield, Mtoni Shamba, Cambridge or Glasshampton, the brushes and the tin of Cherry Blossom (dark tan) would be taken out; his shoes and sandals were always immaculately and lovingly cared for. The same meticulous care was applied in every area of Roger's life. When dealing with a piece of fruit, out would come the pen-knife to dissect and then peel and core it; then the blade would be wiped, the knife folded and returned to his pocket before he started eating - great care. Following the instruction of St Francis, he always showed great reverence towards the scriptures, rescuing and repairing copies that were neglected or ill-used. The records that he kept of his management of the estate here, of the woods and the vegetable garden, were beautifully tidy and complete, as were the files on his pastoral ministry wherever he worked.

He was a person who believed in taking care of everything that was entrusted to him - including those for whom he prayed; there was a great integrity to his life in this way.

But Roger was also someone who enjoyed the wider world too. On leaving school he did his National Service with the Royal Marines; after being commissioned he served in Libya, Egypt, Cyprus and Greece. He said it was one of the happiest times of his life, opening up new possibilities for him. He returned to take a degree in farming at Wye College in Kent and then post-graduate

*Brother Roger Alexander
SSF died on 22 May 2007,
and his funeral Mass was
at Hilfield Friary.
He was aged seventy-four
years and in the thirtieth
year of his profession
in vows.*

studies in Cambridge before joining the Colonial Service to work in the West Indies and Sierra Leone. He had a great love for Africa and while in the Society of St Francis was with us in Tanzania, where he planted and tended a citrus orchard, and then later on in Zimbabwe in Harare, at Bonda Mission and finally at Chipinge in the Eastern Highlands. He always liked to have a bit of garden to cultivate and his most recent hobby was the botanical painting of flowers.

These are some of the outward expressions of his life, but what was going on within him? What made him tick?

Roger was a very private person who didn't readily disclose himself to others; he longed for relationship but didn't find relationships easy. He felt very deeply, and certain things must have affected him profoundly - perhaps most of all the death of his younger brother, Hugh, in a motor-cycle accident while he was out in Sierra Leone; when he first joined SSF he took his brother's name. But he could be great fun too; around the meal table at St Francis House, Cambridge, in good

company, the conversation would flow and there would be much laughter. He valued those who were his friends and he could be extraordinarily kind.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus speaks of his relationship with his disciples. They are to him as branches to the vine (and I'm reminded of Roger with his pruning knife) - connected, rooted in him so that they can bear abundant fruit. They are to abide in him as he abides in them; it's a relationship of love and intimacy which issues in the fullness of joy.

Roger was brought up in the faith within a Christian family, for which he was always grateful. He was confirmed at the age of twelve (being given the confirmation name of Francis!) and thereafter was a very faithful communicant; he had a great sense of obligation towards God and a recognition that you don't approach God lightly or casually - reverence and careful preparation before receiving the sacrament were very important to him. Every decision in his life was taken prayerfully and carefully. Yet throughout his life he was always looking for more than just a formal relationship with God, obedience out of obligation. He sensed the call to go deeper into God; he felt drawn into closer relationship. His leaving farming and the Colonial Service to train for ordination at Cuddesdon in the 1960s was in response to this call. He served his curacy in Rugby but still he wanted more in terms of a living relationship with the Lord. His joining SSF in the 1970's was part of that call, as was his decision in the 1980's to undergo very thorough training in the Ignatian discipline of spiritual direction. He was probably too personally reticent to attract many directees, yet it certainly led him deeper into relationship with the God who, in Jesus, loved him from all eternity. For Roger, as for the rest of us here, his Christian life was a journey yet to be completed, a response to a promise yet to be fulfilled, a joy still to be entered into.

Roger faced his approaching death in the characteristic way that he had lived his life - with meticulous care. I don't think I've ever come across someone so well prepared for death. But it wasn't just a matter of fortitude in the face of the inevitable, for Roger approached Sister Death knowing that he was loved and accepted by God, in the assurance that his sins were forgiven and trusting in the new life in Christ that had begun at his baptism. 'I have said these things to you', says Jesus in the Gospel reading 'that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.' Today we give thanks to God for Roger Alexander, for the fruitfulness of his life, for our fellowship with him and for the work of God's grace - and we entrust him to that joy, with the saints, in all its fullness.

Roger, our brother, may the Lord give you his peace. f



Roger Alexander SSF

Brother Bernard SSF

Samuel SSF

Isaiah 43: 1-7: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine'. Here's the Lord God, through the prophet, speaking to a broken, hopeless, exiled people - words of comfort, of forgiveness, of reconciliation and of restored relationship.

Bernard was a very remarkable spiritual guide. Whether you were coming to him for regular direction (and a huge number did) or for 'one-off deepies' as he used to call them, he had the extraordinary knack of putting his finger ever so gently on the place where one was hurting, where one was fearful, where one was vulnerable. In fact, on occasions it could be almost irritating: 'How on earth did he know that about me?' - but it came from an acute listening, a wise understanding of human nature, and what someone has described as 'an almost cunning way of searching one's heart for what was real and true'. At the same time he was able to communicate to those who came to him that, whatever the wounds - in fact because of them - God our Father loves us to all eternity; that through Christ's wounds we are loved, redeemed, restored, forgiven. For many, this was a new or deeper understanding of themselves as uniquely precious in God's eyes.

And, of course, he could bring people to this understanding and this recognition, because he knew it himself - both the woundedness and the love of God. He knew that he himself was not the totally integrated human being he was made to be before God; he used to say that 'it's very easy for all of us to think one thing, feel another, say another and do yet another'; there were parts of him that were incomplete or spoilt, and he knew that the transformation of our humanity into the full image of Christ is a work in progress. 'Kyrie eleison', 'Lord have mercy' was a constant prayer for him; he was a penitent. And yet he lived with the full assurance of the desire and power of God eventually to effect that transformation. For many years, above the seat in his room where he sat to meet with people, there was a black and white photograph of one of the carvings from Chartres portraying the creation of Adam. The naked Adam has his head resting on God's knee, and God is bending over him with one hand above and the other cradling Adam's head. It's a sculpture of the most exquisite tenderness, and I always felt that by placing it there, where everyone who came could see it, Bernard was saying to us: 'This is what the business is about, this is what you've really come for - to be led deeper into the mystery of God's creative love and its completion and fulfilment in Jesus Christ.' 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.'

1 Peter 1.3-9: 'Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ'. It's a letter to new Christians which bubbles up and overflows with joyful praise. Bernard was such a good preacher, missionary and communicator of the Gospel because the message he gave came across as an overflowing of joy and delight: in creation, in people, in everything beautiful, in reconciliation and peace, in the promise of glory. He had a stock of certain phrases: 'Keep praising', 'Are you singing and dancing?', 'Praise the Lord, Alleluia!' said in a certain way, and 'Clever old God'. There was something of light hearted jocundity in all this, but it flowed from a deep source of joy in the life, death and resurrection of Christ and was a faithful echo of Blessed St Francis.

*Brother Bernard SSF
died on 17 May 2007, and
his funeral Mass was at
Hilfield Friary. He was
aged seventy-eight years and
in the forty-seventh year of
his profession in vows.*

Another picture on his wall was one of the Poverello, dressed in rags, dancing with an imaginary violin under his chin and a branch with leaves for a bow.

It wasn't without cost; following in the way of Francis did involve renunciation on a number of levels and just occasionally a sense of that could surface in his life, but in his deepest self he knew what his desire was really for: 'God of your goodness give me yourself, you are sufficient for me' - words of Julian of Norwich which he treasured. He always came back to the joy of the Kingdom and to what he used to describe as 'the deep belly laugh of God at the heart of creation'.

And, lastly, from the Upper Room in the Gospel of John: '**As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.**'

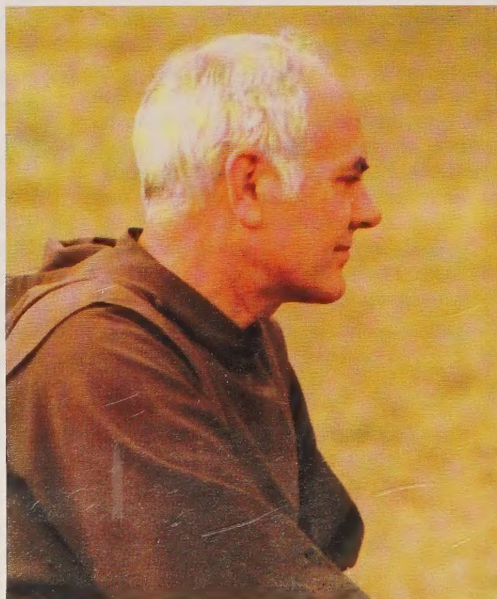
Bernard was a man of many gifts, but not in every department. He enjoyed good food but was a disaster in the kitchen. Using his gifts, while always keeping a critical eye, he was a great servant of the institution, whether that be of the Church on the General Synod, or of the Society of St Francis as, successively, Guardian at Plaistow, Brisbane and Hilfield. He believed passionately in working and praying for Christian unity and was a keen supporter of the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury. There was a certain driven-ness in how he went

about all this, but it was giftedness and energy expended for the sake of the Kingdom, co-operating with God in love and compassion for the world. In his book *Open to God* he writes in gratitude of being drawn into the loving, redeeming, purposes of God for the world: 'I'm glad to know (and partly know) such a God and to have some little share in what he is all about'.

At the heart of it all was his life of prayer, the life of getting up early in the morning and just being there before God in contemplation; here above all he began to enter into the life of the Blessed Trinity, the mystery of giving and receiving and sharing of love which lies at the heart of all reality and which is the source of all good.

Bernard had an enthusiasm for icons and he loved to talk about them. For a long time it was the great Rublev icon of the Trinity that drew him, then it was Pierro della Francesca's painting of the Resurrection; he was also much taken with a photograph of a Japanese Zen garden. But the San Damiano crucifix was the choice of his last few years. It portrays, not just the suffering Jesus, but the risen and ascended Lord in the glory of the Father, and includes, around the cross, the life of the Church on which the Spirit is outpoured. Here the world is redeemed; here the world is completed, restored to its true relationship with God; here all creation is brought together to do what it was made to do - to worship God and to enjoy God for ever.

It was before this tender, compassionate face of Christ that Bernard would sit or kneel when he could no longer work or remember people's names, when he could no longer celebrate the Eucharist or even read the scriptures. He would just sit gazing at it - as Francis had done: 'My God, my all. My God, my all. My God, my all'. May God, in his mercy and compassion and love for Bernard, bring him and us at the last to the fullness of his life and joy with the saints for ever. *f*



Bernard SSF

Brother Geoffrey SSF

Samuel SSF

'Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith'. Hebrews 12.2

I think that this is an appropriate text for an address for Geoffrey's funeral because throughout his life Geoffrey has always been something of a pioneer, someone who has gone ahead and led the way. He was brought up with his brother, Guy, not far from here at Shaftesbury, but it was at Cambridge in the early 1940s that he first came into close contact with the brothers of SSF, particularly coming under the influence of Br Denis. Chichester Theological College followed and he was ordained, quite young, to a curacy at Holy Trinity, Weymouth.

Geoffrey joined SSF in 1948. The brothers must have been pretty sure about him because he didn't serve any time as postulant; Algy just noviced him straight away, and after six months at Glasshampton he was transferred to the Cambridge Friary in Lady Margaret Road, where he worked among students and was chaplain to the fruiting and hop-picking missions that we ran at that time.

In 1953 Geoffrey was sent by Algy to Plaistow where he got the new St Philip's church and hall built - and Princess Margaret to lay the foundation stone. St Philip's in those days was a flourishing Anglo-Catholic Church with a large youth club and Geoffrey threw himself energetically into the life and ministry of the parish. When Philip Strong, Bishop in Papua New Guinea, in England for the 1958 Lambeth Conference, challenged

SSF to send out brothers to his diocese, Geoffrey was the natural choice as leader of the group and in January 1959 he set out for Australia aboard the P & O liner, SS Arcadia. You can read all about those early days in PNG in his memoirs, but, in brief, it was Geoffrey's unflagging, indomitable, pioneering spirit which got the Anglican Franciscan life established in

*Brother Geoffrey SSF died
on 11 April 2007,
and his funeral Mass was
held at Hilfield Friary.
He was aged eighty-five
years and in the
fifty-seventh year of his
profession in vows.*

that part of the world, first in PNG, then in Australia, the Solomons and New Zealand. He became the first Minister of the separate Province of the Pacific in 1968, and in 1970 was elected Minister General of SSF, by then a rapidly expanding order around the world.

Geoffrey held the post of Minister General for fifteen years at a crucially important period in the life of the Society. In that time he circumnavigated the globe at least once a year, visiting all the houses of the then three provinces, meeting, teaching and challenging the brothers; he interviewed each of us individually. He entered fully into the life of a house while he was staying and insisted on undertaking his share of the manual work; at Patteson House, Honiara, in the Solomons, a high ranking Roman Catholic religious who had come to visit Geoffrey was somewhat shocked when he was directed to the showers and loos which it was Geoffrey's custom to clean whenever staying. He led by example. In his role as Minister General he didn't just concern himself with the First Order Brothers, but was also a great encourager of the Third Order, particularly in those parts of the world where there were no First Order Houses. The Third Order groups in Hong Kong, Singapore, Southern Africa and West Africa were all nurtured by his tireless attention.

Perhaps the pinnacle of Geoffrey's achievement as Minister General was the 'Gospel Now Conference' held here at Hilfield in 1981.

It was the first international gathering of brothers and sisters of the First and Third Orders which he called to challenge us to live out the fullness of our Franciscan vocation: a passionate working for peace and justice around the world, a deep commitment to the poor wherever they are found, a life thoroughly grounded in prayer and the study of the scriptures, and throughout it all a sacrificial following of our crucified and risen Lord. The Conference was hugely influential on us at the time and it has played a significant part in shaping the vision of our life today.

And when in 1985 he completed his last term of office as Minister General, at an age when most people are wearily looking forward to retirement, Geoffrey went off to Zimbabwe to pioneer yet another Franciscan initiative, the Community of the Divine Compassion (the name an echo of his Plaistow days). Africa always had a very special place in his heart. He would love to have died in Africa.

It's not very surprising that this irrepressible, pioneering, spirit that was so much part of Geoffrey's character, found the limitations of old age and failing health very difficult to bear. He was hugely frustrated; he hated being confined and, to his mind, 'useless'; he resented being unable to return to Africa to live and work among the poor there. He was quite unafraid of Sister Death - he reminded us often that he was dying - he was just very impatient about the waste of time in getting there!

In the end, the real pioneer, for Geoffrey and for all of us, is Our Lord Jesus Christ, 'the pioneer and perfecter of our faith' as the Letter to the Hebrews puts it. Jesus is the one who is always going before us in sacrificial self-offering, always encouraging us to give ourselves more fully, more generously to the way of the cross for the sake of the world. And he is the one in whom all our efforts, all our vision and all our pioneering - inadequate and flawed as they are - are fulfilled in perfection. Geoffrey, to Our Lord and Saviour, our friend and brother, our pioneer and perfecter, we now commit you with thanksgiving, with trust and with joy. *f*



Geoffrey SSF

franciscan

is published by the European Province of the First Order of the Society of Saint Francis, a Religious Order in the Anglican Communion. The Society of Saint Francis is committed to follow Christ in the way of Saint Francis of Assisi, in humility, love and joy.

Opinions expressed in articles are those of the writers and are not necessarily those either of the Editorial Board or of the Society of Saint Francis. Permission to reproduce any part of this publication must be requested in writing; please enclose a stamped-addressed envelope.

All editorial correspondence should be addressed to:

franciscan Editor, St Francis House,
113 Gillott Road Birmingham, B16 0ET UK
or email: franciscan@franciscans.org.uk

Copyright

© The Society of Saint Francis,
2007 The First Order,
The European Province
All rights reserved

ISSN 0532/579X

Printed at The Friary Press, Dorchester